



Puget Sound Skills Center students and staff pose for a photo on the House floor with Rep. Skip Priest. The group was in Olympia to discuss education issues in February.

State Representative Skip Priest

30th District



2008 Legislative Review

Spring 2008

Dear friends and neighbors,

Thank you for allowing me to represent you in Olympia. As your representative, I worked on several issues that affect the quality of life in our district and state-wide this year.

Education continues to be my focus as the ranking member on both the K-12 and education appropriations committees. One of the major victories in education this year was the passage of comprehensive career and technical education legislation I authored. In addition, I am a member of the Basic Education Finance Task Force. This group has been working hard to create a funding formula for our K-12 education system by next January.

With an estimated \$2 billion budget surplus this budget cycle, we had the opportunity to address shortfalls in the state's education funding we haven't been able to afford to fix in the past. Unfortunately, instead of finally carving out an education budget that "funds the fundamentals" of schools, budget writers left town having spent more money, but without addressing the major issues in education spending that have resulted in lawsuits like the one in Federal Way.

Most of you are aware of the Zina Linnik tragedy that shook our communities last year. At the request of the Linnik family, I took a leadership role in putting forth common-sense legislative updates to our sex offender tracking and monitoring laws. The Legislature took some steps forward, but more work remains to be done to better protect our children.

This legislative update highlights some of the larger issues I worked on this year. Please feel free to call me if there is something you need assistance with or if you have questions on other issues.

Thank you, again, for allowing me to represent our district. I encourage you to contact me anytime with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Rep. Skip Priest • 30th Legislative District

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SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET SPENDS MORE, DOESN'T ADDRESS SCHOOL FUNDING

This year's budget piled on an additional \$291 million of spending and punted a long list of "to dos," including education finance, until 2009. Unfortunately, with \$8.7 billion in new spending – almost a 34 percent increase since 2005 – state budget writers set the stage for a \$2.5 billion shortfall next year, according to nonpartisan budget staff, which will further erode the Legislature's ability to address school funding.

Despite all the new spending, my greatest disappointment is that the basic education funding formula was not updated to meet the needs of today's schools.

If we continue to lump education dollars in with the rest of competing state programs, our schools will persistently be short-changed. We can and should do better for our kids.

FUND THE FUNDAMENTALS OF EDUCATION

The state must "fund the fundamentals" of education such as books, transportation, special and gifted education, classified staff salaries and salary equity.

Frankly, part of the reason property taxes are so high is because the state continues to pass unfunded mandates onto our local school districts. This makes our school districts more reliant on levy dollars to pay for the state's good ideas.



We all agree educating our children is a top priority, but the element that must be addressed now is how the state funds it K-12 education system. I serve on the Basic Education Finance Task Force, which is in the middle of the 19th study on education funding in the last decade. This group is required to come up with a workable funding formula for K-12 education by December. The proposal will be turned into legislation for consideration in the 2009 legislative session.

The Federal Way School District has led the charge on this debate when it filed the salary equity lawsuit and won in court last fall. I am working on a funding plan with the goal of making thoughtful progress on education funding. In partnership with local school officials, parents, fellow legislators and others, we can finally solve the education funding equation.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION UPDATED



Career and technical education (CTE) is at a crossroads. With 175,000 students relying on career-path courses, it was time to update the 20-year-old programs to make sure they fit the needs of today's students and their future career paths.

A bipartisan group, which included Federal Way Superintendent Tom Murphy, Federal Way Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Officer Tom Pierson and many other officials statewide, met over five months last year. Together we created a comprehensive bill that updates CTE programs to reflect the needs of today's students.

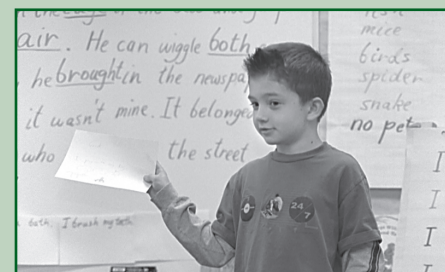
Senate Bill 6377, signed into law this year, will ensure CTE programs are not squeezed out by growing credit requirements for graduation. The legislation also requires CTE programs to clearly connect course skills with recognized certificates, apprenticeships and technical college programs. Last, it requires students have better access to and awareness of CTE programs and the myriad of career opportunities available through them.

This legislation received overwhelming support from students, school districts, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and employers. We believe these valuable programs will help students prepare for success outside of high school and help lower the unacceptable drop-out rate.

LEGISLATURE PASSES END-OF-CLASS ASSESSMENTS

With the delay of the math and science WASL, legislators involved in the education debate worked to pass a measure last year that would look at end-of-class assessments in these subjects. Over the interim, a private group measured results and benefits of these types of tests and concluded they would be a good tool for our schools.

I've been very concerned, as have parents and teachers, that a one-size-fits-all test is not serving our students, particularly in subjects in which students are struggling. By the time test results are received under the current testing method, it's too late to offer remediation. And, the results don't show what the child needs to learn.



Allowing our schools to test children at the end of an algebra or geometry course will set up a rigorous and equitable system in which teachers and parents can quickly diagnose where children need help and then offer remediation.

Our hope is that students will get the help they need to stay in school and graduate on-time.

SOME STEPS TAKEN TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY



After the Linnik family's tragedy last year, they approached me and asked for help to improve and update Washington's sex offender monitoring and tracking laws.

Our first action was to invite law enforcement and other public safety experts to meet with community members in

Federal Way last July. Many of the ideas from that meeting were turned into legislation that I presented to the governor's Special Sex Offender Task Force last fall.

Of the legislation presented to the task force, the most important bill passed this year was House Bill 2713. It creates a statewide DNA database of people convicted of sex crimes, or crimes considered by experts to be precursors to sex crimes. This bill is a proactive step for our law enforcement and families.

Also passed this year, House Bill 2786 will allow for Level 1 sex offenders guilty of failing to maintain their required address registration to be placed on the statewide sex offender notification Web site. This is critical because sex offenders who don't want law enforcement or the public to know where they live are the ones we worry about the most.

Another critical bill I sponsored this year, House Bill 2719, was signed into law. This measure will ensure sex offenders receive accurate sentences that reflect all previous convictions for the same types of crimes.

I am also pleased to report that \$5 million was included in the budget to help law enforcement verify sex offender registration information. Better tracking means added protections.

Last, the biggest disappointments were that my legislation requiring electronic monitoring (GPS) for the most dangerous Level 3 sex offenders and requiring Internet and Web site registration for sex offenders did not pass. Technology is growing rapidly and our state must keep up with the newest and most innovative ways to track and monitor sex offenders in our communities and online.

I am pleased with the steps we took this year, but we have just begun our work to better protect our families from sex offenders.

BASIC EDUCATION FINANCE TASK FORCE MEETING SCHEDULE

These task force meetings will be held in Olympia and are open to the public. Everyone is welcome to bring ideas, questions and solutions to the group for consideration. If you can't make it to a meeting, please feel free to contact me with your ideas on how to best solve the education funding equation. I can be reached at (360) 786-7830. Information can also be found online at www.leg.wa.gov/Joint/Committees/BEF.

May 5-6, 2008, Senate Conf. Rm. A-B-C, Cherberg Building
June 9-10, 2008, Senate Conf. Rm. A-B-C, Cherberg Building
July 7-8, 2008, Senate Conf. Rm. A-B-C, Cherberg Building
August 6, 2008, Senate Conf. Rm. A-B-C, Cherberg Building

September 15-16, 2008, Columbia Room, Legislative Building
October 14-15, 2008, Senate Conf. Rm. A-B-C, Cherberg Building
November 17-18, 2008, Columbia Room, Legislative Building
December 8-9, 2008, Senate Conf. Rm. A-B-C, Cherberg Building

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LIBRARIANS ARE CRUCIAL PARTS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

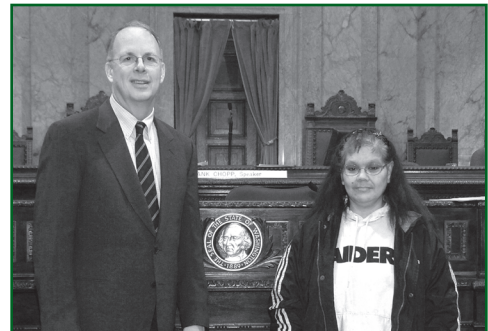


Thank you to everyone who weighed in on the librarian funding issue this year. For lawmakers like myself who worked with the librarians group and budget writers, this was an incredibly successful effort.

In 2007, the Federal Way School District cut 20 librarian positions because of budget restrictions. However, due to the well-organized group of librarians, including several from Federal Way, who helped me and others keep up the pressure for more school library funding, an additional \$4 million was allocated in the supplemental budget. I appreciate their dedication and hard work.

LOCAL CONSTITUENT HELPS OUR COMMUNITIES

A special thanks goes to 30th District constituent and my friend Evangeline Adadines. She takes time to join me in Olympia to work on issues that affect our disabled community.



Evangeline Adadines on the House floor with Rep. Skip Priest

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